

News in Brief

No hairy escape

A MUGGER who attacked a woman at London Fields railway station was caught after police recognised his Afro hairstyle.

Simeon Blackwood-Odain, 19, was found guilty of attacking the 36-year-old on October 20. He was arrested after he was spotted by officers who had heard a description of him which mentioned his distinctive Afro.

Blackwood-Odain pleaded guilty and was sentenced to four years and eight months at Snaresbrook Crown Court. He will serve a minimum of two years and four months before being considered for parole. (Katherine Faulkner)

Natural nappies

NURSERIES across Hackney are ditching Pampers and reverting to old cloth nappies.

After a successful trial of natural nappies at Roundabout Nursery at Homerton Hospital, five other nurseries around the borough are switching for good.

With an average pack of Pampers costing £4, Hackney is set to save an estimated £8,000 for every child they look after by switching to using all natural nappies.

Some businesses are already taking advantage of the change in perception with The Clean Green Nappy Machine selling real nappies at £9.79 for 12. (Josie Ensor)

Dalston delays

CONSTRUCTION works on the East London line extension are likely to cause huge delays in the Dalston area for the next two months.

From this weekend bus routes 30, 38, 56, 242, 277 and N38 will all be diverted to accommodate the works, which will see the East London line connected to Highbury and Islington in time for the Olympics.

Transport for London has advised travellers to use alternative routes through De Beauvoir. (Katherine Faulkner)

Get off the rails

A HACKNEY man has landed a fixed penalty notice after sprawling drunk in the path of an oncoming train.

British Transport Police officers rushed three vehicles to Waltham Cross rail station, where the unidentified 36-year-old was lying across the track.

A spokesman for British Transport Police said: "Officers attended Waltham Cross station following reports of a man trespassing on the railway line.

"On arrival officers removed a man from the downward slope of the station platform. He was subsequently arrested for being drunk and disorderly and for trespassing." (Katherine Faulkner)

Police jubilation over jailing George



Katy Barnato & Clare Dickinson

LOCKING up singer Boy George has been described by Hackney police as one of their finest achievements in the last twelve months.

In a document detailing crime figures for the last year, police listed several "key borough achievements", one of them being the successful conviction of the 1980s chart-topper.

Boy George, real name George O'Dowd, was jailed for 15 months in January for imprisoning a male escort in his Shoreditch flat, following an investigation by Hackney police.

Yvonne Traynore, chief executive of the London division of Rape Crisis, said it was wrong to focus on a celebrity crime: "Because a character is high profile it does not mean they are any more important than any other case. With 121 rapes, 317 sexual assaults and 1,871 domestic violence cases involving people who are not celebrities I would hope that a key achievement next year is the conviction of more 'unknown' perpetrators of these crimes."

Crime figures for the same period show murder, hate crime and rape are all increasing.

Other successes listed on the Metropolitan Police website as "key borough achievements" for Hackney were the issuing of an ASBO to a 38-year-old prostitute, banning her from entering the Shacklewell Lane area, and the arrest of a mobile phone robber moments after he committed the offence.

The number of people murdered in Hackney rose to 12 in 2008, compared with five in 2007.

'This is one of the country's toughest police environments'

One was Shaquille Smith, the 14-year-old stabbed to death on a park bench in South Hackney. Five teenagers from Hackney have been charged with his murder and a trial has been set for April.

Hate crime was also higher in 2008, with an increase in both racist and homophobic attacks. There was a 50 per cent rise in the number of rapes, from 84 in 2007 to 127 in 2008.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has called Hackney "one of the most challenging policing environments in the country".

Both Hackney Borough Police and the Metropolitan Police declined to comment. At the time of going to press, the material had been removed from the Metropolitan police website.

They fought the law and the law won: rock stars and their criminal records

■ Sid Vicious

Charge sheet: Murder (1979)

The poster-boy of punk was charged with murder after he woke up from a drug binge in a New York hotel room to find his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen, lying dead on the floor with a stab wound. He was bailed but died later that evening after overdosing on heroin supplied by his mother.

■ Ian Brown

Charge sheet: Threatening behaviour (1998)

The former Stone Roses singer was jailed for four months after telling an air stewardess on a flight from Manchester to Paris that he would "chop her hands off" if she didn't leave him alone. While in prison, he temporarily converted to Islam so he could receive higher-quality food.

■ George Michael

Charge sheet: Engaging in lewd behaviour (1998)

Never a stranger to controversy, George Michael hit the headlines in 1998 when he exposed himself to an undercover policeman in a public toilet. As well as finally forcing him to reveal his sexuality, the star was fined \$810 and sentenced to 80 hours of community service.



■ Richard Ashcroft

Charge Sheet: Disorderly conduct (2006)

Famously dubbed by the tabloids as 'Mad Richard', the former Verve frontman cemented his eccentric reputation after wandering into a youth centre in Wiltshire and demanding to work with the teenagers at the club. The organisers rang the police when he refused to leave, and Ashcroft was fined £80.

■ Pete Doherty

Charge Sheet: Extensive, ranging from burglary to drug possession (2003 - present)

In court more often than the recording studio, Hackney's most notorious law-breaker has been arrested for numerous drug offences, but his longest stretch came in 2003 when he was sentenced to six months in prison for burgling ex-band mate Carl Barat.